

THE

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# SHEKEL



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**The Siege and Capture of the Fortress of Buda  
23rd August - 2nd September 1686**



# OUR ORGANIZATION

AMERICAN ISRAEL NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION

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The American Israel Numismatic Association is a cultural and educational organization dedicated to the study and collection of Israel's coinage, past and present, and all aspects of Judaic numismatics. It is a democratically organized, membership oriented group, chartered as a non-profit association under the laws of The State of New York. The primary purpose is the development of programs, publications, meetings and other activities which will bring news, history, social and related background to the study and collection of Judaic numismatics, and the advancement of the hobby.

The Association sponsors major cultural/social/numismatic events such as national and regional conventions, study tours to Israel, publication of books, and other activities which will be of benefit to the members. Local chapters exist in many areas. Write for further information.

The Association publishes the SHEKEL six times a year. It is a journal and news magazine prepared for the enlightenment and education of the membership and neither solicits nor accepts advertising. All articles published are the views and opinions of the authors and may or may not reflect the views and opinions of A.I.N.A.

Membership fees: Annual \$15.-, Life \$200.-, Foreign \$22.-

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## ***The President's Message*** ***by Moe Weinschel***

Dear Members,



The terms of service of the following AINA  
Directors will expire in March 2001:

Edward Janis  
William Rosenblum  
Julius Turoff

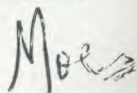
Each has indicated willingness to continue. In order to comply with our bylaw, we issue a Call for Nominations for these positions. Nomination forms are available from AINA, PO Box 940277, Rockaway Park, NY 11694. The forms accompanied by a short biography must be returned by Dec. 15, 2000, so that the candidates can be listed. Directorship is open to all paid up AINA members.

We are still waiting for sketches, ideas and/or suggestions for the AINA annual medal. There is a \$100.- prize for the chosen design and your initials will be placed on the medal as the designer. So what are you waiting for??

Repeating a previous message to our *Snowbird members*. Please keep us informed of your address changes so that you can get your Shekel and other communications in time, and we will avoid the high postal charges for returned as well the costs of resending your mail.

A computer "glitch" dropped some names from the New Issues mailing that included the IGCMC annual New Years medal. We have retained the mailing list to compare and correct. If you did not receive your annual IGCMC medal, please let us know and we will send it out.

Shalom



# *The Editor's Page*

by Edward Schuman



Dear Members:

Although it is more than a month early until Chanuka, we want to wish to all a Joyous and Happy Holiday. Relevant to this holiday, Marvin Tameanko has contributed a terrific article entitled "The Original Chanuka Gelt." I received this article more than six months ago, but have saved it especially for this issue.

As the year draws closer to ending, it is that time of the year when my wife Florence really starts getting busy mailing out the dues notices. You will be receiving these in the next few weeks. We ask that you not put these notices aside, to attend to at a later date, but to please send back your dues remittances promptly. It is very costly and time consuming to mail out reminder notices and as we are all volunteer workers for A.I.N.A., anything to make our work easier makes it far more pleasant. If you can add a small amount extra as a donation, it certainly is appreciated and enables the organization to keep the dues structure as is.

We also hope you can consider using this traditional gift giving holiday for the SHEKEL and A.I.N.A. membership. The magazine will remind your benefactor of your gift at least six times during the year, and most important, you need not be a coin collector to enjoy reading Jewish History.

There was only one response received regarding a classified section for the SHEKEL. It is best at this time to use the Club Bulletin, authored by Donna Sims as a secure way to buy, trade or sell. We would hope our members would take advantage of this free service to our members. Donna is waiting to hear from you.

Lastly, the London School for Jewish Studies (formerly known as Jew's College) has received the back issues of the SHEKEL donated by A.I.N.A. Member Edgar Guest, author of the Siege of Buda article in this issue, has graciously paid the entire costs of shipping.

Till the next issue

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ed", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.



## A Judaica Victorian Love Token

In Victorian times it was the fashion to take coins, have one side smoothed off, and engraved with the name or initials of a loved one. This would be made into a piece of jewelry and presented as a token of love or affection.

Love tokens are fairly easy to obtain because so many of them were made. They are often made using the current coins of the day but are also known to be made from gold coins, most probably for a special occasion. All love tokens are highly collectibles and in fact there is even an organization devoted solely to the collecting of love tokens.

The token illustrated is an exceptionally unusual love token - made from a silver Canadian quarter which has been engraved with the words "*Mizpah 21st Dec. - 1891*". The hand engraved script is exceptionally beautiful as it was created during the height of the art of the engraver. What makes this such an unusual piece is that the word "*Mizpah*" is engraved instead of the person's name...

*Mizpah* is a Hebrew word meaning: "wherever you are, may good fortune be with you". It was taken from Genesis 31:48-49. "This mound," said Laban, "shall be witness from now on between you and me." That is why it was named Galeed - and also Mizpah, for he said: "May the Lord keep watch between you and me when we are out of each other's sight."

The word *Mizpah* has been used since to name towns, hotels, synagogues, masonic lodges, shriners groups and other places because it holds such good blessings.





# THE SIEGE OF BUDA

By Edgar Guest

On the afternoon of Monday 2nd September 1686, after several unsuccessful previous sieges in 1598, 1602, and 1684, the army of the Holy League, led by Charles of Lorraine, finally captured Buda (Ofen), the most important north-western bastion of the Turkish empire. This terminated one hundred and forty-five years of Turkish rule in Hungary's capital city and heralded the end of Turkish presence in the heart of Europe.

The siege and capture of Buda was celebrated all over Christian Europe. It was described in detail in some one thousand seven hundred different published memoirs, reports, and diaries, always from the point of view of the victorious Christian armies. A detailed, vivid, and gruesome description of the, even by seventeenth century standards, hideous atrocities committed by the victorious Christian soldiers can be found in the Memoirs of Master Johann Dietz, a barber-surgeon attached to a Brandenburg regimental.<sup>1</sup>

The only existing eyewitness account from inside the beleaguered city, was written by a Jewish resident of Buda. As far as can be ascertained, it has never been republished in English. The full text of *Megillat Ofen* (Chronicles of Buda) 1686 by Isaac Schulhof was translated from Hebrew into Hungarian for the first time in 1979 <sup>2</sup>. It gives a highly emotional and moving description of the final hours of the siege and of the fate of Buda's Jewish residents.

At the time of the 1686 siege there was a sizable Jewish presence in Buda. The majority was of Ashkenazi (German) origin. But there were also Sephardic (Spanish) Jews who had arrived from various parts of the Turkish Empire, and these had their own separate synagogue, the so called "small" synagogue across the street from the "great" (Ashkenazi) synagogue <sup>3</sup>. The Jews had to pay an annual poll-tax to the Turkish authorities but otherwise they enjoyed religious and economic freedom and considerable autonomy to manage their own community affairs.

The 1686 siege of Buda started with the occupation of the town of Pest on the 17th June 1686. The investment of Buda was completed by the 20th and was followed by intensive artillery bombardment. On the 22nd July a lucky hit on a tower blew up the main gunpowder store, killing 1500 people and opening a gap of some 100 yards in the main defensive wall.

The besieging army attempted a general assault on the 27th July and again on the 3rd August. Both these were repelled but the defenders suffered heavy casualties. During the siege the Jews also took part in the



defense of Buda, except on the Sabbath when they were exempt from all work.

The third and final assault on the 2nd September was spearheaded by Brandenburg soldiers, assisted by Hungarian hussars; once within the city, they engaged in an indiscriminate massacre of Turkish and Jewish men, women, and children. Master Johann Dietz describes how he witnessed the unspeakable atrocities committed by the soldiers: dead Turkish and Jewish women stripped and mutilated; pregnant women ripped open, naked babies and toddlers speared and smashed against walls; male genitals collected by the sackful for trophies and for preparing aphrodisiacs.

During the last phase of the assault, when the Brandenburg soldiers were fighting in the vicinity of the Jewish quarter, the Jews sought refuge in their "great" synagogue.

According to Schulhof:

*"The community gathered there from all corners of the Jewish quarter, men, women and children, crowding, jostling, thronging, all breathless, fleeing the arms. Everyone was lamenting and weeping in despair, crying out for help, and the weeping rose unto the skies - such great distress as our souls suffered had not been heard before, And a great many soldiers, infantrymen (called Musketiere in German) broke in, brandishing their destructive weapons, their guns, their naked swords in their hands, and also Hungarian hussars, holding their curved swords. And they made a bloody sacrifice in the House of the Lord: they spilled the innocent blood of the sons of Israel".<sup>4</sup>*

Isaac Schulhof also took refuge in the "great" synagogue but escaped the massacre although he lost his wife and only son.<sup>5</sup> Seventy-two Jews were killed in the Synagogue massacre. Three hundred years later, in 1968, the bones that were unearthed during archeological excavations were reburied in the martyrs' plot of the Budapest Jewish Cemetery.

Many other Jews were killed elsewhere. According to Schulhof some four hundred Jewish captives were held on a boat on the Danube waiting to be ransomed. Hungarian hussars rushed the boat, overpowered the Austrian guards and started killing the Jews. Many tried to escape by jumping into the river and drowned. Those who survived the massacre were taken hostage for ransom. There followed a swift and highly organized rescue effort by the Jewry of Europe. The main organizer of the fundraising effort was Samuel Oppenheimer, a Jewish banker, army contractor and Purveyor to the Court, one of the few Jews with a permit to reside in Vienna. He himself ransomed a number of Jewish prisoners by mustering a fully equipped musketeer for each hostage and offering to



cancel a significant part of the war debts of the Court. One of his agents, Alexander Tauszk of Prague, collected 21,000 Florins from the Jewish communities of Cracow, Metz, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Cleves and elsewhere, to ransom 274 Jews captured at Buda.

To celebrate their triumph at Buda in 1686 a large number of commemorative medals were struck by the victors depicting the siege and praising the leaders of the victorious armies. The Nicolas M. Salgo collection of Coins and Medals of Hungary and Transylvania 6, was auctioned in Switzerland by Spink-Taskei of Zurich and Roland Michael of Geneva on the 12th April 1994.<sup>7</sup>

Among., the 871 lots offered for sale were eleven medals (lots 413-423) commemorating the recapture of Buda from the Turks in 1686. They form part of the so-called "Turkish recapture medals" series minted during the reign of Emperor Leopold I the Hogmouth, (1657-1705). Four of the eleven medals were classified "extremely rare", two "very rare", three "rare", and two "scarce". Six were graded "Extremely Fine". the rest "Very Fine".

They all show the city of Buda and the date of the siege. Lot 414, a silver medal, has a most unusual and probably unique design for a medal issued in a Catholic! country. It incorporates the Tetragrammaton (the name of God written in Hebrew characters). The appearance of this in a Catholic country is probably without precedent. It was only in Protestant countries that God's name was permitted to be written in Hebrew Characters.

The eleven medals, like all the coins and other medals in the Salgo Collection, carried the highest possible provenance: nine of them had been listed in the Prince Montenuovo Collections, one in the Horsky Collections, and one in the Wellenheim Collection

#### Notes:

1. *The Memories of a Mercenary* by Johann Dietz are housed in the Royal Prussian Library in Berlin, and as far as is known they have not been translated into either English or Hungarian. Extracts in Hungarian from them have recently been made available by Gabor Ronay, a journalist and historian living in England, and published by the Balassa Balint Tarsasag, Esztergom, Hungary, in 2000.
2. SCHLHOF Issaac: *Bucai Kronika 1686*. Translated from the Hebrew by Laszlo Jolesz. With comments and notes by Ferenc Szakaly. (Magyar Helikon, Budapest 1979)
3. The two synagogues were located on the northern side of the Castle



district, on Jewish Street (today: Tancsics Mihaly Street) and were connected by an archway. The "great" synagogue was located at what is today No. 23, and the "small" synagogue at No. 26 .

4. Quoted in *Jewish Budapest. Monuments Rites, History*. By Kinga FROJIMOVICS, Geza KOMOROCZY, Viktoria PUSZTAI, Andrea STRBIK. (Central European University Press., Budapest 1999)

5. Isaac Schulhof was born around 1650 in Prague. Through his mother, daughter of Samson Bacharach, rabbi of Prague and later of Worms, he was related to the leading Jewish families of Western Europe. He moved to Buda where he became a respected and wealthy member of the community. He married Esther, daughter of Efraimi ha Cohen, the internationally famous rabbi of Buda. Esther was killed during the massacre of Jews following the capture of Buda by the Christian armies. Schulhof's young son, Samson, was forcibly taken from him by a Brandenburg officer, kept imprisoned in Gyor waiting to be ransomed, but died before ransom could be arranged. Schulhof himself was held hostage by a corporal of musketeers who sold him for thirty gold ducats and a jug of Neckar wine to a "tall noblewoman" (Schulhof's description) who delivered him to the house of Samuel Oppenheimer, "Imperial Court Jew" in Vienna who played a major part in organizing the ransom of the captured Jews of Buda. Having regained his freedom, Isaac Schulhof, together with many other Jews of Buda, first settled in Nikolsburg, and later returned to his native Prague where he remarried and started a new family. He died in 1733.

6. Born in Budapest, Nicolas M. Salco received his and Ph.D. from the University of Budapest. He began his business career in Switzerland in 1938. He moved to New York in 1948 and became a U.S. citizen in 1953. After many years as an outstanding businessman in the U.S. he was appointed U.S. Ambassador to Hungary by President Reagan in 1983, serving in that capacity till 1966. After his return to the U.S. he continued working in the diplomatic service and retired from the State Department in 1993.

7. SPINK-TASKEI, Zurich, and ROLAND MICHAEL, Geneva Auction Sale Catalogue Number 50 (12th April 1994) from which the medal photographs were taken. The photograph of an engraving of the siege and capture of the fortress of Buda pictured on the front cover was taken from the same catalog.





Silver medal 1686. Commemorating the capture of the fortress of Buda. Engraved by J.J. Wolrab. View of the city and fortress of Buda, the portrait of Emperor Leopold above. Below legend in 6 lines: INFELIX BUDAM ETC. Rev. Soldier in armor (Joshua) turned towards the sun, on his left shield Jehova's name spelled out in Hebrew characters. In the distance a battle scene. Below legend in 5 lines: STAT SOL LUNA FUGIT DUM/IOSUA PUGNAT ET ORAT/SIG EGO PELLO DUOS/SIC LEOPOLDUS/ERO. Lettered edge. The appearance of Jehova's name on a medal issued in a Catholic country is most unusual. It was only in Protestant countries that God's name was permitted to be written in Hebrew characters.

Silver medal 1686. Commemorating the capture of the fortress of Buda on 2nd September 1686. Unknown engraver. LEOP:I:D.G.ROM:IMP:S.A. REST:HUNG. Laureate bust of the Emperor to right. Rev. ASTRORUM OFFUSCAT RADIOS. Landscape with sun, moon and lightning, the imperial eagle above, view of the fortress of Buda below. Legend in two lines: BUDA CAPTA/1686.





# *The Magic of the Moment*

by Larry Domnitch

Over the centuries Jews have made pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the holiday of Shavuot as they had on all three pilgrimage holidays. On Shavuot, there was also the custom to visit the grave of King David since tradition holds that he was born and died on this holiday

When Shavuot arrived in 1948, a month after the establishment of the State of Israel, Jews could no longer continue to make the pilgrimage to the Western Wall because they were denied access under the Jordanian occupation. (1948-1967) However, the pilgrimages to King David's grave on nearby Mount Zion continued. Over the next nineteen years crowds of pilgrims made their way to Mount Zion. From there they could see the Old City and view the Temple Mount.

On the morning of Shavuot, June 15 1967, just six days after the liberation of the Old City of Jerusalem following the Six Day War, the Old City was officially opened to the public. For the first time in almost two thousand years, masses of Jews could visit the Western Wall and walk through the cherished streets of Judaism's capital city as members of the sovereign Jewish nation. Each Jew who ventured to the Western Wall on that unforgettable day represented the living realization of their ancestor's dreams over the millennium. It was one of those rare euphoric moments in history.

In the late hours of the night, thousands of Jerusalem's residents streamed toward the Zion gate eagerly awaiting entry into the Old City. At 4 A.M., the accumulating crowds at Mount Zion were finally allowed to enter the area of the Western Wall. The first *minyan* (traditional quorum of ten men) soon began. Fifteen hundred people shared in that unprecedented moment. As the sun rose, there was a steady flow of thousands of Jews who made their way to the Old City. In total, two hundred thousand Jews visited the Western Wall that day. It was the first pilgrimage en masse of Jews to Jewish controlled Jerusalem for a Jewish festival in two thousand years, since the pilgrimages for the festivals in Temple times.

The Jerusalem Post described the epic scene:

" Every section of the population was represented. Kibbutz members and soldiers rubbing shoulders with the *Neturei Karta*, an ultra orthodox sect who do not recognize the State of Israel. Mothers came with children in

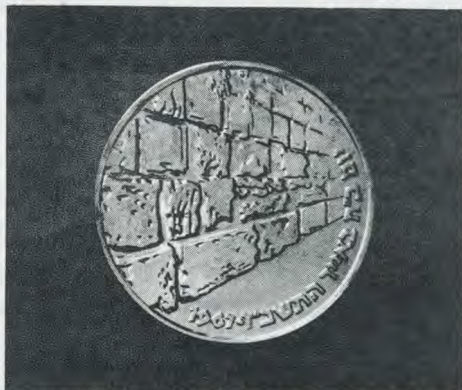


arms, and old men trudged steeply up Mount Zion supported by youngsters on either side, to see the Wall of the Temple before the end of their days. Some wept, but most faces were wreathed in smiles. For thirteen continuous hours a colorful variety of all peoples trudged along in perfect order, stepping patiently when told to do so at each of six successive barriers set up by police to regulate the flow." (*Jerusalem Post*, July 15, 1967, 1)

An eyewitness described the moment as follows:

" I've never known such an electric atmosphere before or since. Wherever, we were stopped, we began to dance. Holding aloft Torah scrolls we swayed and danced and sang at the tops of our voices. So many of the Psalms and songs are about Jerusalem and Zion and the words reached into us a new life. As the sky lightened, we reached the Zion gate. Still singing and dancing, we poured into the narrow alleyways beyond." (*"Voices of Jerusalem-Crowd of Tears," Hadassah Magazine* 77, no. 9 'May 1996'-23)

On the day of Shavuot 3,320 years earlier, the Israelites stood at Mount Sinai and felt the gravity of the moment as a unique relationship was formed between themselves and their Creator. On the day of Shavuot following Israel's amazing victory in the six day war, multitudes ascended to the western wall as their ancestors had done in the past and they also celebrated the holiday just a short distance from the Temple Mount. They too, felt the magic of the moment



The Victory Coin was issued to mark the victory of the Israel Defense Forces in the Six Day War June 5-11th 1967. The obverses show the emblem of the IDF against a stylized star. The reverse shows the Western Wall. Around the bottom rim the date of its restoration to Jewish worship, in Hebrew "28th day of Iyar 5727" and "1967" in English.



# BANIAS

Banias is the name of a ruined city at the foot of Mount Hermon on the Hermon Brook, one of the sources of the River Jordan. It is featured on the reverse of the River Jordan State Medal issued by Israel in 1990. The obverse of the medal shows the River Jordan, as seen from a satellite photograph. The reverse shows the Banias waterfall, one of the sources of the Jordan River, with rich vegetation with Mount Hermon in the background.



Banias was called Dan or Mivzar Dan ("the Fort of Dan" by the Jews. It stood over a cliff with a grotto dedicated to the Greek god Pan and the nymphs, and hence was named Paneas (Banias being an Arabic corruption). In classical times the beauty of the nature in Banias must have been spectacular. Wandering shepherds revered the cave where the spring of Banias emerges. They determined it as the home of the god Pan. Pan is a figure of Greek mythology, the god of nature, flocks and shepherds. He appears with the lower body of a goat, while his upper half is human. His flute-playing entrances dancing goats. He is accompanied by a trail of nymphs. In Hellenistic times a sanctuary to him was established. The foundations of temples and courtyards have been excavated there in the last century.

In 198 B.C.E., Antiochus III conquered Palestine from the Ptolemies by his victory near this place. Later the city belonged to the Itureans, from whom it was transferred by Augustus to Herod who named it Caesarea in honor of Augustus and to whom he erected a temple there. Philip the Tetrarch (Herod Philip), Herod's son, developed the city, resided there, and struck coins with images of its buildings. It was generally known as Caesarea Philippi ("of Philip") to distinguish it from the better-known Caesarea-by-the-Sea.

In 61 C.E. Agrippa II renamed it Neronias in honor of the emperor Nero, but it kept this name only until 68. In 70 Titus held games there to celebrate his victory in the Jewish War and many Jewish captives were put



to death. In the Talmud, Caesarea is called Keissariyyon or Little Caesarea; the Mishnah also mentions the cave of Pamiyas referring to the same place. Caesarea's territory extended as far as Hadar and the Phiale Lake; the Huleh Valley also belonged to it. A statue of Hadrian which stood there was regarded by the early Christians as representing Jesus healing a woman. The Talmud refers to the emperor Diocletian's oppression of the people of Paneas (Lieberman, in JQR, 36 (1946), 350ff.; TJ, Shev. 9:2, 38d). In Roman-Byzantine times Caesarea belonged to Phoenicia; its bishops took part in church councils from 325 to 451. In Crusader times it was called Belinas and a powerful castle (Qalat al-Subayba) was erected above it.

Since Banias was situated on the main road from Palestine to Damascus it served in the Middle Ages as an administrative center to a district with the same name. During the 11th century there was a relatively large Jewish community, whose members were called the Baniasisites. They were frequently mentioned in genizah documents. A document of 1056 shows that the Banias community was well organized and had a bet din.

Since Babylonian Jews had settled in Banias the community was split into two sections, the Palestinians and the Babylonians, who differed in their versions of prayers. These two sections existed to the beginning of the 12th century. A Karaite pseudo-messiah is reported in 1102. Benjamin of Tudela mentions no community in Banias in 1170 and it is possible that it ceased to exist during the Crusades. Later, Banias was reinhabited by Jews.

Even during the early Ottoman period, Jews still lived at Banias, as attested by a document from 1624 which mentions the murder of a Jewish physician, by the name of Elijah ha-Kohen of Banias, by an Arab sheik (Ben Zvi, in Tarbiz, 3 (1932), 442). In 1920 the French and the English mandate contested the possession of Banis. France won. From 1948 to 1967 Banias served the Syrians as a base for attacks on Dan. In the 1960's the Syrians planned to divert the waters of Banis to the Yarmuk river in order to prevent the water from flowing into Israeli territory. The Israelis sabotaged this plan, which was eventually one of the causes for a new war.

On 10 June 1967, the last day of the Six-day War, Golani troops conquered the tiny village of Banias. After its illustrious past Banias is now purely touristic. The only worship takes place at the tomb of Elisha, visited by Druze and Moslems. From the Pan cave a path leads to the top of a small cliff, on which stands the tomb of Elisha. This "tomb" must be taken with a grain of salt, for according to the bible, the prophet went to heaven. The Druze call the prophet Nebi Kader; "kader" means green. A small white building harbors the grave, covered in cloth.



# THE ORIGINAL "CHANUKAH GELT"

by Marvin Tameanko

The most popular and joyous Jewish holiday is Chanukah. And why should it not be? It is a festival that celebrates freedom from Seleucid (Syrian/Greek) oppression and the re-establishment of the Jewish commonwealth under the Maccabees (Hasmonaeans) in 164 B.C. Without Chanukah Judaism, as we know it today, would not exist. But the modern version of the Chanukah festival has been modified and re-molded over the centuries and many of its marvelous origins have been forgotten.

Most of us still teach our children that the great 'miracle' of Chanukah was the discovery of a little jar of oil in the desecrated Temple in Jerusalem, which would have burned for only one day but, miraculously, lasted for eight. This is a wonderful children's story and it has been re-told faithfully for at least the past 1,500 years, but it is only a folk tale and it conceals and diminishes the real miracle that happened on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev in 164 B.C. On that day the army of the Maccabeans recaptured most of Jerusalem from the Syrians and then cleansed and rededicated the holy Temple. The Hebrew word Chanukah means 'dedication' and the original festival was a commemoration of the Maccabean military victories over the Syrians and a celebration of freedom for many years before the story of the little jar of oil made its appearance in Jewish literature. Because of this, I believe that the tradition of giving gifts during the eight day holiday, including money (gelt in Yiddish), was established during the first Maccabean Chanukah ceremonies in 164 B.C.

For the real origins and meaning of Chanukah we can turn to ancient records including the coins struck by the Seleucids and the Hasmonaeans. The Books of Maccabees, in that part of the Bible called the Apocrypha, were written in 120 B.C., 44 years after the events took place. The first book describes the capture and rededication of the temple in Jerusalem after the defeat of the Syrians and the victory celebrations that lasted for eight days. The Syrians under king Antiochus IV, Epiphanes, (God Manifest) who ruled over Israel at that time, decided to constrain the unruly Jews by imposing Greek culture and religious customs on them. Also, the Seleucid king assumed the authority to appoint the High Priest in Jerusalem and desecrated the Temple by erected a shrine to the Greek god, the Olympian Zeus. The Syrian king then tried to destroy the roots of Judaism by prohibiting circumcision, the observance of the Sabbath, the dietary laws, and the religious festivals. The country- folk living in the hills around Jerusalem had not been intimidated by this forced conversion to



Hellenism and, led by a minor priest named Mattathias of the Hasmonaean clan, they revolted. Using hit-and-run, guerilla-like tactics, the first ever recorded in history, the zealous Jews defeated several large Syrian armies sent against them. The Jewish military commander was Judah, a son of Mattathias, nicknamed the 'Maccabee', perhaps meaning the 'Hammer', or as some historians say, taken from the Hebrew acronym for the battle cry, "Who is like unto Thee among the powers, O' Lord". Judah's military strategy was simple. Ambush and kill the enemy general with a concentrated strike force then put the Syrian, demoralized and leaderless army to flight. After several battles, Judah and his brothers captured Jerusalem, rededicated the Temple and decreed that the eight days be celebrated forever as "a festival of joy and gladness" (I Maccabees 4:49-59). No mention is ever made in the books of the Maccabees of the little jar of oil that lasted eight days and the real miracle was, of course, the amazing military victories of tiny Israel over the mighty Seleucid armies.

The second book of Maccabees is a follow-up to the first book and gives more details intended to convince the Jews in the diaspora, especially in Alexandria, to adopt the new religious festival, which they were slow to do. The second book also explained why the holiday was celebrated for eight days. It said that because of the Syrian desecration of the Temple the Jews were unable to celebrate the very important pilgrim festival of Sukkot, which would have been held a few months earlier. The first Chanukah was meant to replace this lost Sukkot festival and the people came to the re-dedicated temple bearing palm fronds (lulavs) and citrons (etrogs) just as they would have done on Sukkot. They kindled many lights to illuminate the Temple and sang the hymn of praise, the Hallel. (II Maccabees 10:1-8). And they celebrated Chanukah for eight days, the same length as the Sukkot festival (including the day of Shemini Atzeret). The message to the Alexandrian diaspora prefacing the second book of Maccabees asked the Egyptian Jews - "to observe the Festival of Sukkot in the month of Kislev" (II Maccabees 1:1-9). Sukkot was probably the most significant festival in those days because it contained ancient, important agricultural and harvest rituals such as the prayer for rain during the planting season. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur became the foremost high holidays for Jews only after the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in A.D. 70.

The festival celebrated when the Maccabees reclaimed the Temple in Jerusalem was called "Sukkot in Kislev" for many years but in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. the Megillat Ta'anit, The 'Scroll of Days on which Fasting is Prohibited', called this holiday "Chanukah", meaning Dedication (of the Temple), for the first time. But other literature of that century gave this



4

Maccabean holiday a different name. Flavius Josephus, the Jewish/Roman historian, writing around A.D. 94, said that his people called this holiday the "Festival of Lights", referring to the oil lamps lit in the Temple during the ceremonies (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XII). Josephus did not say how the festival originated or why it was called by this name but he also never mentioned any miracle involving a little cruse of oil. The original holiday name, Sukkot in Kislev, seems to have been entirely forgotten by this time.

It appears that almost immediately after the rededication of the Temple the Chanukah festival was subjected to revision and dilution. The prosperous and powerful Babylonian Jewish community, living under the Syrian kings, had enjoyed a large degree of religious freedom and self governance, even during the revolt in Israel, and they were hesitant to celebrate the defeat of their patrons by their co- religionists. Also, soon after the war, the Israelites themselves patched together several favorable peace treaties with the Seleucids and so did not want to antagonize their old enemies by raking up old memories of war. Both groups of Jews did not wish to displease or insult their powerful Syrian overlords and they began a process of making the festival of Chanukah 'diplomatically' and 'politically correct'. To do this they de-emphasized the military miracles of the war and concentrated on the rededication of the Temple and, then later, on the miracle of little jug of oil that burned for eight days. This would be analogous to citizens of the USA celebrating Independence Day as a commemoration of the Bostonians throwing chests of tea into the bay during the Boston Tea Party and never mentioning the military battles with the English at Concord, Lexington and Bunker Hill.

The miracle of the jar of oil first appeared in written documents in the Babylonian Talmud, (Shabbat, 21b), written down in around A.D. 500. The teachings of the Talmud had been memorized and communicated orally by Rabbis for many years earlier but only committed to writing in the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D., so the actual date that the story of the little jar of oil was introduced into Jewish tradition is unknown. However, the switching of the miracle of Chanukah away from the Maccabean military victories to the rededication of the temple and the little jug of oil may have occurred less than 60 years after the war ended and for several reasons. First, the Maccabean Kings in later years became Hellenized despots and treated their own people cruelly. In fact, Alexander Jannaeus called Yehonatan the King and High Priest of the Jews on his coins, 103-76 B.C., a great nephew of Judah Maccabee, incited a civil war among his own people that lasted for six years and resulted in the deaths of thousands.<sup>1</sup> The Jews became disenchanted with the Maccabean kings and turned away from the



Hasmonaean dynasty in disgust. Eventually, they tried to diminish and belittle the earlier Maccabean glory and popularity by ignoring their mighty victories over the Syrians. Second, the compassionate rabbis, teaching among the common people, abhorred war because no matter who won, everyone suffered and the countryside was devastated. So they tried to suppress the martial spirit of the nation by downplaying the Maccabean victories. Third, like all nations in any era, the Jews were torn between the policies of 'passive' accommodation and 'active' resistance to political oppression. During the war and for many years afterwards, there was a large pro-Syrian 'passive' party in Jerusalem who were willing to tolerate the Seleucid enforcement of Hellenism on their culture and religion. This passive faction consisted of both politicians and religious leaders including the Syrian appointed High Priests in Jerusalem. The Maccabean leaders led the national, 'activist' faction or the zealots, that rebelled against the foreign persecutors. In the labyrinthine political situation following the Maccabean victory over Antiochus IV, the passive party convinced the majority of Jews to accept Syrian domination as long as their religious freedom was guaranteed. A treaty was worked out between the Jews and Syrians in 155 B.C. and the Maccabean rulers then became Seleucid vassals or feudal princes who enjoyed religious freedom but were politically dominated by the Syrians. These Jewish kings walked a slender tightrope between the new Syrian kings and their usurpers, supporting one rival then the other as the situation warranted.

Turning to the origins of 'Chanukah Gelt', several scholars believe that this custom of giving money as a gift began in eastern Europe probably sometime before the 16<sup>th</sup> century when, on the fifth day of the holiday, it was customary to celebrate with a family dinner and to give presents of money to the children. But I would suggest another theory for the origin of these money gifts. When the Jews destroyed the armies and camps of the Syrians, they took large quantities of weapons, armor, horses and money as plunder. It is related in I Maccabees 3:12 that, after the victory at Shechem, Judah himself took the golden sword from the dead Seleucid leader, Apollonius, and used it for the rest of his life. The booty included many chests or bags of Syrian coins used to pay the mercenaries and to purchase captives by the slave traders who accompanied the army. (See I Maccabees 3: 41) And, as was usual in ancient days, this loot was distributed among the victorious soldiers. Modern-day war medals, awarded to soldiers after campaigns, look very much like coins and are symbolic of these ancient spoils of war. I propose that this is the true origin of the traditional Chanukah Gelt given during the festival. On the first celebration of Chanukah in Jerusalem, and during the ceremonies of



rededicating the Temple, large amounts of these coins were given to the soldiers, the widows and orphans of the war dead, (see II Maccabees 8:28), and perhaps to the general population who had been overtaxed by the Syrians for many years. If this theory for the origins of Chanukah Gelt seems far-fetched, consider the tradition of eating 'latkes' (potato pancakes) in the diaspora and donuts in Israel as a part of the holiday festivities. These food items are fried in oil and this is, supposedly, an allusion to the oil that miraculously burned for eight days.<sup>2</sup> It appears that over the centuries historic traditions can be easily translated into quaint and simple folk customs.

The coins taken after the battles as loot probably consisted of the silver tetradrachms, didrachms and drachms of Antiochus IV and earlier Syrian kings. It is a recorded fact that for many years these Seleucid coins were used as the preferred money for commerce in Judaea and also to pay the Temple taxes in Jerusalem, despite the fact that they carried the graven images of kings and pagan deities in violation of the Second Commandment.<sup>3</sup> Also, the Jews did not strike their own coinage in those years and foreign coins circulated widely in the country. The Syrian coins usually depicted an idealized portrait of the ruling king and a reverse image of the Greek god, Zeus or, sometimes, of the goddess, Athena. It is ironic that these particular coins were accepted by the Jews during those years because the enforcement of the worship of Zeus was the prime cause of the revolt against the Syrians. The priest Mattathias, the first Maccabee, precipitated the rebellion by killing a Jew about to sacrifice a pig, the totem symbol of Zeus, on an altar in the town of Modiin. The Syrians had demanded that Jews give up their devotion to the One God and pay homage to Zeus by sacrificing a pig and eating its flesh. As a digression, I believe that this is the reason for the great hatred, far in excess of the prohibition in the dietary laws, that observant Jews feel for swine. Eating pork in ancient days was a solemn token of worship to a pagan deity and the greatest act of apostasy for Jews.



A tetradrachm of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, 175-164 B.C., showing his diademed head on the obverse and an enthroned Zeus holding Victory on the reverse. This coin was struck in Ake- Ptolemais, the modern day city of Acco (Acre) in Israel as indicated by the Greek HR



monogram under the throne. The legend on the reverse reads as KING ANTIOCHUS, GOD MANIFEST (Epiphanes), BEARER OF VICTORY (Nikephoros). *Catalogue of Greek Coins in the British Museum (BMC) Vol. IV, 17*

Syrian silver coinage continued to be used in Judaea for many years afterwards. As the Jewish homeland was a dependency or vassal state of the Seleucid empire, the coins struck by the Syrian kings were the official currency of the country. The coins of the later Syrian king, Antiochus VII, Euergetes (Benefactor), sometimes surnamed Sidetes because he was born in the city of Side, 138- 129 B.C., may even have been struck in the mint in Jerusalem and they circulated widely in Israel. It would have been poetic justice for the Jews to use the coins of this monarch as Chanukah Gelt to commemorate the Jewish victories over the armies of his predecessors.



A tetradrachm of Antiochus VII, 139-124 B.C., showing the portrait of the king on the obverse and the image of Athena holding Victory on the reverse. The legend on the reverse reads as KING ANTIOCHUS, BENEFACTOR (Euergetes). The coin is dated by the Greek letters COP in the exergue to 137/36 B.C. *Greek Coins and Their Values* by David R. Sear, 7091.

In 138 B.C., Antiochus VII, signed a generous treaty with the Jews so that he would be free to deal with his rival, the Syrian king Triphon. He issued a proclamation that affirmed the religious freedom and some of the political independence of Judaea. In it he said - "I confirm all the tax remissions which my royal predecessors granted you, and all their other remissions of tribute. I authorize you to mint your own coinage as legal currency for your own country. Jerusalem and the Temple shall be free of taxation" (I Maccabees 15:5-9). Later on, when he had defeated his antagonist, Antiochus revoked this treaty and then made war on the Jews. Simon Maccabee, 142-134, the second son of Mattathias, was the High Priest and leader of the Jews at that time but he did not take the opportunity to strike his own coinage and continued to use Seleucid currency.<sup>4</sup> Probably his son, John Hyrcanus, 134-104 B.C., was the first Hasmonaean leader to strike his own coins but these carry the inscriptions of his suzerain, Antiochus VII. If the tradition of giving Chanukah Gelt for the festival continued in these times, the coins given as gifts would have been the silver of the Seleucid kings or the new, small bronze coins struck by John Hyrcanus for Antiochus VII in Jerusalem. These coins were



inscribed with Syrian inscriptions in Greek and, because no Hebrew legends were used, some numismatists attribute these coins only to Antiochus VII. The obverse showed the emblem of the Seleucid dynasty, an inverted anchor, with the Greek inscription for 'King Antiochus, Benefactor'. The reverse illustrated a lily, the flower symbolic of Judaea or Jerusalem which dates back to much earlier times.



A bronze coin of John Hyrcanus/Antiochus VII, 14 millimeters in diameter, supposedly struck at a Jerusalem mint, showing the inverted anchor on the obverse with the legend **BASILEOS ANTIOCHUS EUERGETES**. The reverse displays a formalized lily. The date in Greek letters, **ΑΠΡ**, year 181 = 131/30 B.C. is given in the exergue of the obverse. *Greek Coins and Their Values*, 7101.

These low denomination coins probably became the Chanukah Gelt for children during the festival in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. and they were given as mementos of the great Maccabean victories over the Syrians. The design of this coin was so popular among the Jewish people that it was copied and used during the long reign of the later Hasmonaean king, Alexander Jannaeus, 103-76 B.C., the great nephew of Judah Maccabee. This ambitious and cruel ruler expanded his kingdom so that it was roughly the same size as the domain held by the biblical King David. Taking advantage of the weakness of the last Seleucid kings, Jannaeus achieved political and religious independence from Syria but he later turned into a tyrant who was hated by his own people. His small bronze coins reused the lily design but placed it on the more important obverse side of the coin. He duplicated the Seleucid royal symbol, the anchor, on the reverse to indicate that he had usurped the supremacy over the sea from the Syrians but also to remind the people about the miraculous Maccabean military victories. Also, the coin's legends were bilingual using ancient paleo-Hebrew script on the obverse and Greek on the reverse. These 'copy-cat' coins were really propaganda pieces to affirm Jannaeus' independence and to remind the nation of his glorious ancestry. As such, they were ideal for use as Chanukah Gelt distributed during the holiday.

A bronze coin called a 'prutah', 15 millimeters in diameter, struck by Alexander Jannaeus, 103-76 B.C., probably in Jerusalem. The obverse displays the lily and the paleo-Hebrew legend of **YEHOANATAN THE KING**. The reverse shows a stylized version of the Seleucid anchor and the Greek inscription, **KING ALEXANDER**. *Greek Coins and Their Values*, 6086.





In the history of Israel, the festival of Chanukah must be regarded as a great celebration of the Jewish spirit. The real miracle of Chanukah was the peoples' choice of an 'activist' policy of resistance to Syrian oppression rather than the 'passivist', policy of accommodation and compromise. Jews of every era have faced this same choice and responded courageously, even against impossible odds. Perhaps in the future, with the restoration of the true meaning of Chanukah, the place names of the Maccabean victories, Shechem, Beth Horon, Emmaus, and Beth Zur, will be returned to the Jewish collective memory and take their places alongside illustrious names like The Warsaw Ghetto.

Unfortunately, in those early days of Israel, the passivist factions who controlled the nation, changed Chanukah from a belated Sukkot holiday and a celebration of independence from Syrian domination into a festival of rededication of the temple and a commemoration of the 'Lights' which burned from a miraculous, small jug of oil. Today, Jews are continuing this sad process of transformation and Chanukah is being converted into a Jewish substitute for the competing holiday of Christmas. But, as long as coins are made, we will have Chanukah Gelt to remind us of the great battles won by the Jews against superior Syrian armies and the enormous spoils of war that were distributed to the people, "even unto the little children".

### Notes and Bibliography.

- 1 *Israel: A History of the Jewish People* by Rufus Lears, The World publishing Co., New York 1949, page 143.
- 2 *The Jewish Book of Why*, Vol. II, by Alfred J. Kotlatch, Jonathan David Publishers, New York, 1981, page 267.
- 3 *Ancient Jewish Coinage*, Vol. I, by Ya'akov Meshorer, Amphora Books, New York, 1982, page 59.
- 4 *Ancient Jewish Coinage*, as above, page 35.



## Israel's 52nd Anniversary Coins

Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself, a phrase considered a fundamental precept of human life, has been chosen by the State of Israel as the theme for the coins honoring its recently celebrated 52nd anniversary. The theme is one that transcends Judaism and is a component of every civilized society. From an Israeli perspective, it can be traced back to the legendary Rabbi Akivi, the sage of Talmudic times, who said that "to love one's neighbor as oneself" was the essence of the Torah, or Jewish law. It is quite logical that such basic principle would become one of the cornerstones of humanity.

The coin was designed by Galia Erez. The obverse design is a combination of three ancient gateways, of Western and Oriental motif, with the theme of the coin inscribed in Hebrew, English and Arabic. With the dawn of the new millennium, the gate is symbolic of an entrance and passageway to a new age. Inside the gateway on the coin are two doves to represent humankind's desire to enter the gates of a world of hope, harmony and peace. The reverse is a modern complement to the design of the obverse, thus symbolizing the continuity of the coin's theme.

The 22 karat (.917 fine) gold coin has a face value of 10 shekels, is 30 mm (1.18 inches) in diameter and weighs 16.96 grams. Maximum authorized mintage is 2,000 pieces in proof quality. The two shekel sterling silver proof is 38.7 mm in diameter (1.52 inches) and weighs 28.8 grams. Its mintage limit is 6,000 coins. The other sterling silver coin is a one shekel in prooflike quality, 30mm in diameter weight 14.4 grams also with a mintage of just 6,000.

Information can be had from the AINA New Issues Department, P.O. Box 836, Oakland Gardens, NY 11364 telephone 714-224-9393



Symbolic gateways to a world of hope, harmony and peace are repeated on the obverse (left) and reverses (center and right) of an issue marking Israel's 52nd anniversary. The theme of the coins is "Love Thy Neighbor."



# THE SECRET PLANS OF JUDAH P. BENJAMIN

by Peter S. Horvitz



If the Confederate States of America had paid closer attention to the ideas of Judah P. Benjamin, the coin that stands at the head of this article might have been struck in New Orleans or Dahlonge, for use throughout the South, rather than in Berlin, for use in Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. But such was not the case and Alfred, the second son of Queen Victoria, would become a German duke rather than the king of the Confederate States.

From the beginning of the American Civil War, the cause of the Confederate States was desperate, for the wealth and human resources of the American Republic were heavily weighted towards the North. Only daring and original ideas could save the Confederacy. This was something that Judah P. Benjamin recognized right from the start. The daring of Robert E. Lee and "Stonewall" Jackson served the South well, but original ideas were not well received by most of the Southern politicians. During the course of the Civil War, Benjamin was to develop three daring plans, any one of which might have saved the South. But all three of these plans were vehemently opposed by his enemies. None of them ever came to fruition and the Confederacy was lost.

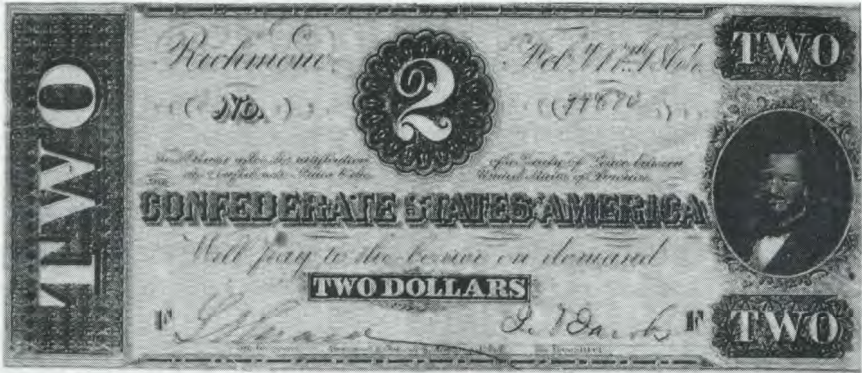
Judah P. Benjamin is a remarkable figure in the history of the United States. He was the first Jewish member of the United States Senate. He was offered a position on the Supreme Court, which if he had accepted, would have given America a Jewish justice long before Louis Brandeis. He was also offered the position as ambassador to Spain. If he had accepted this position, he would have been placed in the remarkable position as the only Jew resident in all of Spain. Benjamin was recognized as both the finest orator of his day and the finest legal mind of his generation. He was a man of amazing resilience and throughout his life he overcame disaster after disaster. During these personal crises he managed to save himself through his wit, his daring, and his ability to recreate himself and his qualifications. At various times of his life he was recognized as an expert on Louisiana Supreme Court decisions, the agriculture of sugar cane, and the laws of sales. He wrote books on all of these topics and each book, in its way, was recognized as the definitive work on its subject.

As the Confederacy's first attorney general, he quickly established himself as President Jefferson Davis's closest confidant, a position he never



lost throughout the war. But Benjamin's position in the cabinet did change. From attorney general he became secretary of war and, finally, he rose to the position of secretary of state.

Judah P. Benjamin, like a number of other prominent figures in the Confederate government, was honored by having his portrait placed on Confederate currency. In the case of Benjamin, his portrait appeared on various issues of the \$2.00 bill.



The first of Benjamin's three daring and radical plans was proposed right at the beginning of the war. He realized that the North had greater financial stability than the South. He proposed that the South gather every bit of its cotton together and immediately export it to Europe, before the North could blockade shipping. This would have established Southern fiscal stability to the rest of the world. But the opposition wished to raise the price of cotton by withholding such exports. By hesitating, the South allowed the North to impose a blockade of its ports before the cotton crop could leave and the South lost its financial leverage. This plan was a secret proposal and Benjamin was often blamed for the poor financial position of the South, which was most unfair. Throughout the war, Southern politicians would often blame failures on Benjamin, which led to anti-Semitism in the South. In the North, the successes of the South were blamed on Benjamin, which led to anti-Semitism in the North.

Benjamin's second plan was also secret. To gain British support for the Southern cause, Benjamin proposed to turn the Confederacy into a monarchy and to offer the throne to Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, Queen Victoria's second son. It was not until May 25, 1864, in a letter to the New York Daily Tribune, that Benjamin first publicly acknowledged this plan. The plan, which was proposed shortly before Gettysburg, came to naught after that decisive defeat. However, if Benjamin had been allowed to pursue it when he first conceived it, given his status as secretary of state, it is quite possible that it might have won for the South the British support that was so desperately needed.



Failing to acquire the throne of the Confederacy, Alfred went on to become, through inheritance, the sovereign duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, where he reigned from 1893 to 1900. The illustrated coin, at the head of this article, is a silver 5 mark struck in 1895 at the Berlin mint for circulation in the duchy. The issue for this coin was 4000. Alfred's other two coins, both from 1895, also range from scarce to rare. His silver 2 mark coin had an issue of 15,000, but his gold 20 mark coin had an issue of only 1000 pieces.

Alfred's son died before him and his duchy was inherited by a nephew. However, in America, where Salic law could not apply, his Southern kingdom might have become the inheritance of his daughter Mary, later famous as Queen Marie of Romania.

Judah Benjamin's third plan to save the Confederacy also fell on deaf ears among the Southern power brokers, although by the time it was proposed the Confederacy was close to collapse. Benjamin's last proposal was to free all slaves who were willing to take up arms in defense of the Confederacy. At this point, with the Southern cause practically lost, the large body of untapped manpower could still possibly have turned the tide. But the prejudices of Benjamin's contemporaries were too strong and the last hope for the South went untried.

After the war, Benjamin was accused by newspapers and anti-Semites of having knowledge of the plot to assassinate Lincoln. Only after passing through a series of most harrowing adventures that could make (and have made) novels of adventures, did Benjamin find a safe haven in England. Later he would rejoin his wife in Paris, after completely reestablishing himself in yet another career. His successes in England, both from a financial point of view and in terms of prestige, were as great as his successes in America. He eventually became among the most respected and well-paid lawyers in all of England.

Judah P. Benjamin is one of the great enigmas of our national history. We are haunted by his ever-present smile. He always seemed to know more than his fellows did, to see deeper into things than his contemporaries were capable of. But like Cassandra, what ever he tried to say was doubted, his plans were thwarted. The results of ignoring him were always disaster. And sometimes these disasters swept him up in their wake, yet he never expressed accusations or regrets. He would pick himself up, reinvent himself, and go on to yet another triumphant career.



# The Emperor in Silver

by Peter S. Horvitz

Joshua P. Norton, Emperor of the United States and Protector of Mexico, has been the subject of a number of articles in the pages of *The Shekel*. In Sept.-Oct., 1994, he appeared in my article "Jews and Bridges" and, in Nov.-Dec., 1994, he is the subject of my "Emperor Norton I. as Comic Book Hero." In the Nov.-Dec., 1988 issue appeared Ed Schuman's "Emperor Norton I." Another interesting article that may be found on the shelves of the reader is "A Mad Monarch's Money" by Gaylen G. Hayes in the April, 1987 issue of *The Numismatist*.

The last two of these articles dealt with the emperor's own paper money, or promissory notes, which he issued to cooperative citizens of San Francisco. These notes bear his likeness and his actual signature. My earlier article dealt with the emperor's greatest contribution to his native city, which was the conception of the bridging of San Francisco Bay, a concept which was original to him and which, in his lifetime, was held as one of the strongest pieces of evidence of his insanity. But his mad nineteenth century dream has become twentieth century reality.

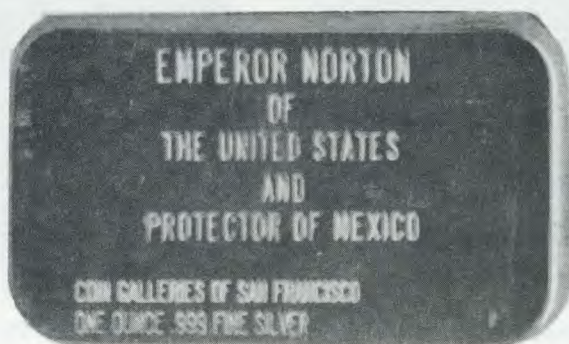
Despite all the literature discussed above, one thing that didn't exist to my knowledge and which my collecting heart deeply yearned for was a representation of the enlightened, if crazed, monarch on actual metal. But alas, although there were all kinds of souvenirs of Norton I - boats, statues, cigars, sourdough chips, chocolates, cards, postal covers, and his own paper currency - there was no medallic representation. At least, so I believed. Now I know different. Spending some time with that wonderful, if expensive, new pastime eBay, I discovered the following item.

The piece I present is a one-ounce silver ingot, apparently struck some time in the 1970's. It measures 29 millimeters by 50 millimeters and is rectangular in shape, with rounded edges. The obverse shows a full standing figure of the emperor by a decorative lectern urn. The emperor is in full military uniform, including a sword. This image of the emperor is quite similar to a plaster statue that dates back to his own time and which may be seen in the Wells Fargo Museum in San Francisco.



The inscription reads EMPEROR NORTON OF SAN FRANCISCO. The reverse has the inscription EMPEROR NORTON OF THE UNITED STATES AND PROTECTOR OF MEXICO. Beneath this, in smaller letters, is COIN GALLERIES OF SAN FRANCISCO and ONE OUNCE, 999 FINE SILVER.

It is delightful to see one of America's most colorful Jewish characters, an inspiration to Mark Twain, Robert Louis Stevenson, and generations of San Franciscans, appropriately honored in silver. Furthermore, as a collector of pretender pieces (as, for instance, James III and Henry IX of England and Napoleon II and Henri V of France) it is satisfying to find, at last, a piece representing America's most famous pretender.





## A Jewish Town Trade Token

On February 14, 1912, the territory of Arizona became the 48th of the United States. 150 years ago, Jews in this area had already begun to help transform the arid, inhospitable desert into a productive agricultural, mining, grazing and commercial region.

Permanent settlement of Arizona by Europeans occurred after the California Gold Rush of 1848–50. The discovery of gold in Arizona brought many new residents to the state from 1862 to 1864. Most of them came from California, and they included many Jewish businessmen. During the 1860s much of the retail business in the towns of La Paz, Wickenburg, Prescott, and Tucson was operated by Jews. The merchants and entrepreneurs who set up enterprises at the sites of new mines also included Jews. When the mines were exhausted or proved unprofitable, businesses and entire communities were abandoned.

Mayer, Arizona is a town on State Route 69, also known as the Black Canyon Road. The town was named for Joseph Mayer who had established a store and tavern there. The town became a stagecoach depot and grew to be a trading center for sheep and cattle as well as a mining area. It was thought that Mayer would be the richest and largest city in the territory but when the gold and silver deposits faded out so did the optimist's dream.

The illustrated trade token was offered for sale on a recent eBay auction. The issuer was a L.F. Wilson, and the obverse of the token bears his name as well as Mayer, Arizona. The reverse has the inscription "good for 12 1/2 cents in trade." Does anyone know who L.F. Wilson was?





# *Lorenzo Da Ponte*

by Peter S. Horvitz

The genius of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was complimented in his great Italian operas by the sly wit and dramatic sense of his librettist. This dramatic genius's work perfectly matched the rococo charm and sensual innuendo of Mozart's finest tunes. This librettist was born Emanuele Conegliano, a Jew, the son of Jewish parents, on March 10, 1749, in the ghetto of the Italian city of Ceneda.

When young Emanuele was only five, his mother, Rachel, died, leaving her husband Geremia Conegliano, a tanner and dealer in leather, to raise Emanuele and his two younger brothers. Some nine years later Geremia, then 41 years old, fell in love with a seventeen-year old Catholic girl. To facilitate his marriage to young Orsola Pasqua Paletta, Geremia had himself and his three sons converted to the Catholic faith. Apparently this was not a common event in Ceneda, for the bishop of the city himself, Lorenzo Da Ponte, not only conducted the service, but also stood as godfather for the converts. As was the custom of the time, each member of the family then adopted the family name of their godfather, Da Ponte, along with a new Christian name. The eldest son was honored with receiving the Bishop's own name. And so our hero, Emanuele Conegliano, became Lorenzo Da Ponte.

For the first time in a very brief form, in 1807, and, finally, in a greatly enlarged version in 1829-1830, Da Ponte published an account of his own life. It was as filled with intrigues and adventures as numerous and colorful as those of Don Giovanni himself. Lorenzo's education and fear of his father led him to the priesthood. Despite his religious title, he had numerous romantic intrigues. Eventually, he even married. This would finally lead to his flight from continental Europe, first to England and, then, to America, where he would pass the last 33 years of his life.

Lorenzo's literary ambitions first expressed themselves in poetry. Around 1780 he produced an Italian translation of a German play, his first work for the stage. In 1784, his first opera libretto was performed, set to music by the well-known court composer, Antonio Salieri. In total, Lorenzo produced five libretti for Salieri, none of which is now performed. Salieri has a contemporary fame as the central character in the movie *Amadeus* (1984), based on a play by Peter Shaffer, concerning the life of Mozart. In that movie Salieri is represented as Mozart's murderer. While some old rumors exist behind this concept, there is no historical basis for it. Lorenzo Da Ponte also collaborated with Giuseppe Gazzaniga, Vicente



Martin, Peter Winter, and others. In his lifetime, Lorenzo wrote 24 opera libretti. Only his three collaborations with Mozart, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan Tutte* have remained in the standard repertoire.

Lorenzo first met Mozart, early in 1783, at the home of Baron Wetzlar, a rich Jew with whom Mozart was lodging. From their first meeting, the two men began discussing the possibility of Da Ponte supplying a libretto for the young composer, who was ambitious to extend his musical reputation into the very popular field of Italian opera. Da Ponte was at that time busy with work for Salieri. Mozart wrote his father a letter after this meeting which was rather pessimistic in tone, clearly anxious to work with the Italian priest, but fearing that his commitments to Salieri would hamper this possibility. However, Da Ponte quickly finished his work for Salieri and began his text for Mozart.

It was Mozart who had suggested that Da Ponte's first libretto for him be based on Beaumarchais's famous comedy, *The Marriage of Figaro*. Giovanni Paisiello had already composed an extremely popular opera based on the first of the three Figaro plays, *The Barber of Seville*, so a sequel seemed a sure-fire route to success. (It was only in 1816 that Paisiello's 1782 opera would lose its popularity through the introduction of Rossini's classic version of the same story.) The third play in Beaumarchais's trilogy, *A Mother's Guilt*, would not be turned into an opera until 1965, when Darius Milhaud, the great Jewish composer, would undertake the job.

*The Marriage of Figaro* was an immediate success and brought acclaim to both the composer and the librettist. It was Da Ponte who suggested the subject for the pair's next collaboration, the legend of Don Juan. The result is often considered one of the very finest productions of all of opera, *Don Giovanni*.

In 1991, Austria commemorated *Don Giovanni* with a gold coin. The coin was struck in the denomination of 500 schillings. The obverse of this 22-millimeter piece shows the portrait of a mature Mozart. The reverse depicts the infamous Spanish don playing a serenade on his lute. This coin was struck in 1986 gold in an issue of 50,000.





Da Ponte's third and last collaboration with Mozart was *Così fan Tutte*, which appeared in 1790. Forced by circumstances, Da Ponte left Vienna, where he had achieved his greatest fame, and traveled by stages to London. Originally he had proposed to Mozart that the composer accompany him on this voyage. Mozart expressed some interest, but he was busy with his German opera *The Magic Flute* and proposed a six month delay in his departure. By the time Da Ponte would reach London, in 1795, Mozart would be long dead, The composer had died in 1791.

Among those who aided Da Ponte on his journey was his old friend Giacomo Casanova. It is now known that Casanova was not only an inspiration to the librettist while writing *Don Giovanni*, but that he actually wrote a few lines of the text for Da Ponte.

When Da Ponte arrived in New York in 1805, he first hoped to make a living running a grocery store, Eventually, however, his learning and renowned caught up with him. Through a friendship that grew up between Da Ponte and Clement Moore, a trustee of Columbia and author of "*'Twas the Night Before Christmas*," Da Ponte was appointed as professor of Italian literature at the New York college. Da Ponte also oversaw the first productions of the Mozart operas in America. As previously mentioned, in America he published his Italian memoirs, in three different versions, between 1807 and 1830,

Only once in his memoirs, and only in an indirect way, does he refer to his Jewish origins. He brags in the book of his early knowledge of the Hebrew language. However, in another work, published in 1788, he has one of his enemies hurl the following invective at him, "Let us throw him back into the Ghetto, whence came his despicable ancestors!"

Da Ponte also did a certain amount of writing in English, which testifies to his fluency in that language. Among other things, he prepared a number of revised American editions of Lempriere's *Classical Dictionary*, a standard reference work of its day. The fullest edition of Lempriere with Da Ponte contributions is that published in 1836.

When Lorenzo Da Ponte died, on August 17, 1838, his funeral was a large, public occasion, attended by many notable figures of the day. However, years later, through a series of moves, the site of his New York grave was forgotten. Now, just as in the case of his partner, Mozart, the location of the last remains of Da Ponte is a mystery.



## Bruno Walter

Bruno Walter Schlesinger was born of Jewish parents in Berlin in 1876. He studied at the Stern Conservatory and at age 17 became a voice coach at the Cologne Opera. Gustav Mahler, then conductor of the Municipal Theatre in Hamburg, hired him as assistant conductor the following year. Walter conducted in various German towns until 1900, when he became conductor at the Berlin Opera, but soon left to become Mahler's assistant at the Vienna Opera, where he remained until 1912.

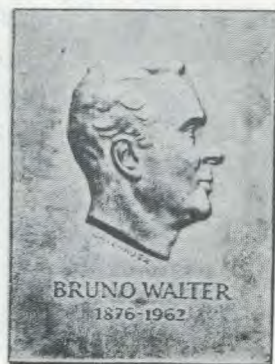
In 1917 he was engaged as general director of the Munich Opera, which gained a brilliant reputation for its fine repertory and high standard of performance. From 1922 he worked as a guest conductor, making his American debut and conducting at the Salzburg Mozart Festival. In 1925 he became conductor of the Municipal Opera in Berlin-Charlottenburg, and in 1929 of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. In 1932 he was a guest conductor of the New York Philharmonic and was re-engaged for the next three seasons under Toscanini.

Meanwhile, the Nazis came to power and because of his Jewish heritage Walter lost his German engagements. In 1936 he accepted the post of musical director of the Vienna Opera, but when the Nazis overran Austria in 1938 he moved to France. On the outbreak of World War II he emigrated to the United States, settling in California. From 1947 to 1949 he became the conductor and musical adviser of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.

Walter was equally eminent as a conductor of orchestral and operatic music. A classicist among conductors, his interpretations were characterized by a contemplative, lyrical quality and by sensitive color and phrasing. He excelled as an interpreter of Mozart and above all of Mahler, with whom he had worked in close friendship for so many years. He conducted the first performances of *Das Lied von der Erde* and of Mahler's ninth symphony, and remained a lifelong champion of his music.

Walter was also a composer, but discouraged the performance of his own works. A man of wide culture, he wrote several books: *Theme and Variations* (1947; autobiography) *Gustav Mahler; ein Portraet* (1957); and *Von der Musik und vom Musizieren* (1957); *Of Music and Music-Making*, (1961). Bruno Walter died in 1962. His recordings are still popular and played on classical radio stations.

The rectangular medal of was made in Austria by Grienauer shortly after the death of the maestro.

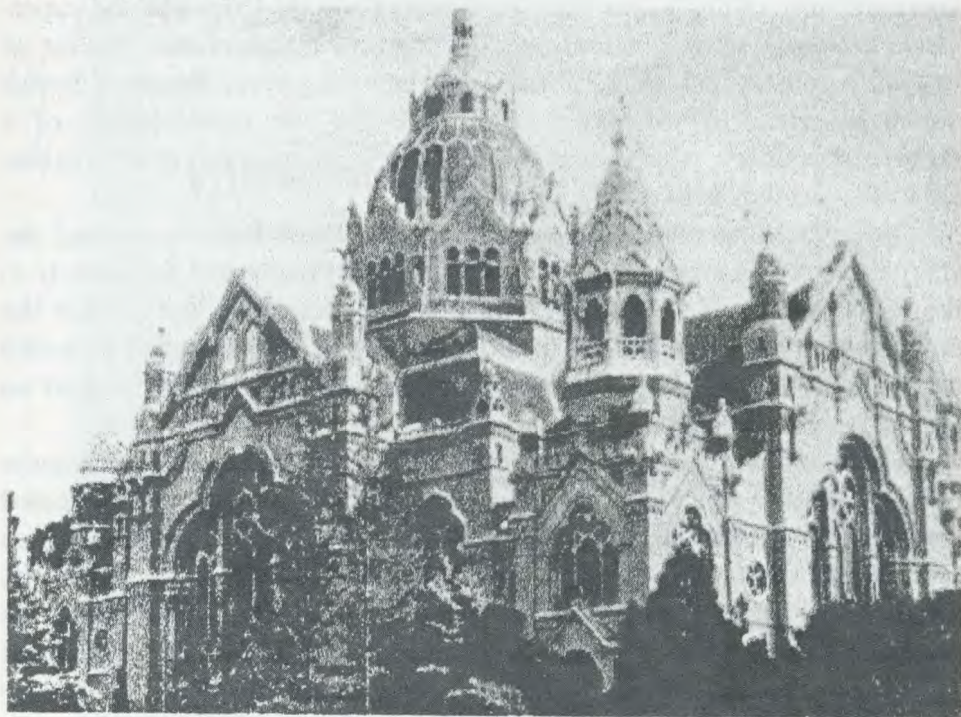




# Szegedin's Jewish History

Szegedin is a city in the southern part of Hungary. The Austrian emperor and Hungarian king, Charles III, had left the choice "whether or not to accept Jews and gypsies" in the hands of the "free royal cities," and these cities, including Szegedin took advantage of this right to exclude them. Jews settled there at a relatively late date, towards the end of the 18th century. The first Jewish family settled in Szegedin in 1781 and their numbers grew to 58 in 1799, 62 in 1806 and 681 in 1840. The first house was purchased by a Jew in 1788. By 1813, Jewish ownership was subjected to restrictions, and houses could be purchased by them only in a very small section of the town. Nevertheless, in 1844 there were 24 Jewish house owners in Szegedin. Recorded in first register of 1799, are listed two goldsmiths, two tailors, and one distiller among the Jews.

The majority of the Jews in Szegedin were merchants and peddlers. Because of the fear of competition by the Christian competition, Jews were excluded from participation in the regional fairs. But by the 1860s and 1870s Jews became active in the establishment of companies, banks, and industries, or as craftsmen. A number of crafts, such as goldsmithing and upholstery, were mostly in the hands of Jews. Also from the 1850s Jews also engaged in agriculture.





Throughout the Jewish community's existence, particularly when members of the Loew family served as rabbis, it had an exemplary organization. The regulations of the community, which were first drawn up in 1791 and revised in 1863, remained in force until the Holocaust. The erection of the first synagogue was planned for 1789, but because of opposition from the authorities was not built until 1803. It was replaced by another (the "Old Synagogue") in 1839, which stood until 1905, when the Great Synagogue was erected. Noted for its magnificence, it was built upon the instructions of I. Loew. The building has since been declared an architectural monument.

Although the community of Szeged joined the Neologists after the schism in Hungarian Jewry following the Congress of 1869, it remained united out of respect for the Loew family. *Neologism* was the unofficial name of the communities in Hungary belonging to the Reform movement. On the basis of the decisions of the General Jewish Congress held in 1868–69, they constituted the majority and therefore called themselves the Congressionals. Reform tendencies had already appeared in the community organizations of Hungary from the beginning of the 19th century. Some were expressed in programs which called for centralization and supervision in the choice of rabbis, teachers, and communal officials. At about the same time pressure was brought for a convention of a synod of rabbis and laymen. From 1850 the Austrian government sought to assure the supervision of Jewish schools in Hungary. At that time a commission was set up to draft a constitution of 285 articles encompassing every aspect of Jewish communal life. One of the demands was for the establishment of a rabbinical seminary, which became one of the main questions of reform that led to the disputes between the communities.

The organizational activities of the advocates of Reform aroused the energetic but disunited opposition of Orthodoxy, expressed particularly in the decisions of the Michalovce Orthodox convention (1865). After the attainment of full civil rights (1867), the leaders of Pest, the most powerful Neologist community, took the initiative of preparing a memorandum on the organization of Hungarian Jewry.

In contrast to most of the Hungarian communities, the Szegedin community also granted a free hand to Zionist activities and allocated considerable sums to the national funds. The school of the community was established in 1844 and remained open until the Holocaust (1944), at first under the supervision of the rabbis of the Loew family, who acted as its principals and maintained its high standard. After World War II it resumed its work in conjunction with the institutions of Youth Aliyah.



The numismatic illustration is of a bond issued in 1880 by the City of Szegedin for the purpose of redirecting the flow of the Theiss River and its tributaries and for rebuilding the city. The face value of the bond is 100 Guklden in Austrian money. Some of the coupons have been cut attesting to the fact that interest on this bond was paid up to a time. The bond today is of course worthless except as a scripophily remembrance.





# THE 'LYON FALSE SHEKEL', A NUMISMATIC PUZZLE

By Marvin Tameanko

False Shekels' are copies of the genuine tetradrachms struck by the Judaeans during the First Revolt against the Romans in AD 66-70. In later years, these copies were used as tokens for a variety of Jewish community functions and also as Christian pilgrims' badges in a revival of 19<sup>th</sup> century religious sentiment. They appear to have been issued from as early as the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> until the 20<sup>th</sup> century for various other purposes. Many such fantasy copies of shekels are still being made to sell to tourists in Israel but these should be classified only as modern souvenir medals. The early false shekels, sometimes called 'Censer Shekels' are much more important in history and they reveal some interesting facts about life in the communities of the diaspora. One very mysterious false shekel has puzzled numismatists and coin collectors for many years. It is usually called the 'Lyon Shekel' after the man who documented it, and only four examples of it are believed to exist.

The Lyon Shekel was discovered in 1809 by workmen digging in the ruins of an ancient building in Huntington, England. The second and third examples are reported to be located in the medal collection of the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris,<sup>1</sup> and the fourth was thought to be in the S. Friedenberg collection in New York city. I believe that the Lyon Shekel is now in the Jewish Museum in London although its provenance is not documented. It appears in the catalog of this museum as Censer Shekel number 1142, a part of an old collection, on page 174, and is illustrated on plate CXCVI. Any subscriber of the SHEKEL magazine on holiday in London should visit this museum in Woburn Square to view its very fine collection of European Judaica.

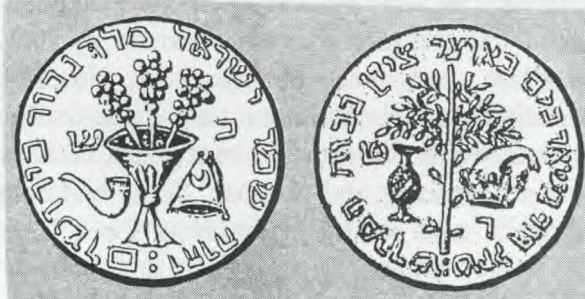
The Lyon Shekel is 46 millimeters in diameter, struck or cast in pewter, an alloy of tin, lead and copper that looks like dull silver, and weighs 12 grams. After it was found, the medallion was passed around by antique dealers and finally acquired by a Mr. S. Lyon, a Jewish teacher of Hebrew and a budding antiquarian. In 1810 Mr. Lyon wrote a pamphlet about the shekel describing it as an unrecorded type of genuine Judaeian shekel and speculated on its eastern origins and religious significance.<sup>2</sup>





**The 'Lyon Shekel' struck or cast in pewter.  
Jewish Museum of London catalog, no. 1142, page 174.**

Although the Lyon Shekel appears to be extraordinary it was, in fact, earlier documented and illustrated in a very rare numismatic book titled 'Cippi Hebraici' by J. H. Hottinger, published in 1662. The illustration is a stylized rendering of the actual medal but it is accurate enough for the purposes of identification. The same medal was recorded as a false shekel in 'A History of Jewish Coinage' by F. W. Madden, published in 1864, page 337. The obverse side of the medal shows a chalice with smoke rising from its top, as do all false shekels, and with a shofar (ram's horn) and the letter S on the left. Also, there is a high priest's or bishop's hat (miter) with the letter K on the right. The inscription on the obverse, in modern Hebrew, block letters reads, SHEKEL OF DAVID LEFT IN THE TREASURY OF ZION IN THE TEMPLE. The reverse displays the leafy rod, similar to the one shown on other false shekels, with a vase on the left side with the letter S above. A type of royal headdress with the letter D is exhibited at the right. The inscription on the reverse states, THE LORD IS THE KEEPER OF ISRAEL THE MIGHTY KING OF JERUSALEM. Antiquarians surmised that the S (Shin) letter over the ram's horn on the obverse was the abbreviation for the word 'Shofar', and the K (Kaph) over the high priest's hat stood for 'Kohen' or priest. On the reverse, the S (Shin) above the vase supposedly represented the Hebrew word 'Shemen', oil, and the D (Dalet) below the cap-like headdress was the initial for the name 'David'.



**The woodblock engraving of the Lyon Shekel from 'Cippi Hebraici'  
by J. Hottinger, 1662.**



The floppy, conical hat with five points shown on this false shekel does not look like a European royal headdress and it is sometimes identified as a medieval fool's cap or a five pointed crown. However, this type of crown resembles somewhat a cap worn by neo-Persian princes on Sasanian coins and this may indicate that it has an eastern or Persian origin. For an example of this, see the child prince on a coin of Varhran II, no. 56 in Gobl's '*Sasanian Numismatics*'. If, on the other hand, it does represent a fools cap, it would suggest a farcical nature for the token and indicate that the piece was some kind of a joke.



**A drachm of Varhran II showing the king and his son facing each other. The prince wears the distinctive Persian cap similar to the crown shown on the Lyon Shekel. Gobl, 56.**

In 1920, the eminent English numismatist, George F. Hill, discussed the Lyon Shekel in the chapter on False Shekels in his book, '*The Medallion Portraits of Christ*', (page 88). He dismissed it as a fantasy piece copied from another false shekel and perhaps fabricated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as a part of a series of medals commemorating biblical characters such as Abraham, Isaac, Saul, and Solomon, this one being for King David. It is noted that these biblical medallions were produced by early token manufacturers who designed them from descriptions of such coins taken from the Talmud. In Baba Kama 97,b of the Talmud, a passage states, - "How did the coins of Jerusalem look? David and Solomon on the one side and Jerusalem, the holy city on the other. And how the coins of our Patriarch Abraham? - An old man on one side, and a youth and maiden on the other." As a coin collector, I wish such genuine biblical, ancient coins really existed, but they did not. Even the biblical medallions, mentioned by Hill and made in 17<sup>th</sup> century are very rare or non-existent. However, Hottinger and Lyon truly believed their shekel was an authentic coin made in Babylon before 500 BC for the Persian Jewish diaspora. In later years, all sorts of explanations were offered for its meaning and purpose. Some historians claimed that it was a gaming piece used by European Jews for a Purim holiday board game, like the money game played with a draidel (toy top) in modern times. Others said that it was made as Chanukah gelt (money) given out by



wealthy families to their children. As well, some weird and fantastic theories were offered suggesting that the Lyon Shekels were used by the Knights Templar in England as secret password tokens or by the Masons as identity badges for senior officers. This is nonsense, of course, but secretive organizations are always susceptible to such canards.

Close examination of the Lyon Shekel reveals that it is very similar in design to the many of the false shekels or censer pieces made in the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century and which were used as souvenirs of visits to Christian pilgrimage sites in Europe or as badges to affirm strong religious beliefs.<sup>3</sup> These were made in Germany or Bohemia and some of them were designed for the use of the Jewish communities as tokens, medallions and gaming pieces. They were produced up until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and many of them still survive.



**A typical false shekel of the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century.  
It closely resembles the Lyon Shekel.**



The inscription on the reverse of the Lyon Shekel, referring to “The Lord is the Keeper of Israel.....”, echos the structure, words and sentiments of the Psalms of David and sets a deep religious tone for the medallion. Therefore, the token must have had some quasi-religious function. The devices of a shofar, oil cruse, royal Persian crown, and a Kohen’s headdress strongly suggests the Jewish festivals and the obverse inscription stating that the token is a - “Shekel of David Left in the Temple’s Treasury...”, hints at some secret cache of money as if a prize is waiting to be gained. From these observations and the presumed Persian connection through the royal crown on the reverse, one could conclude that the Lyon Shekel was made to be used during the no longer practiced 17<sup>th</sup> century Jewish custom of giving money gifts during the festival of Purim, or perhaps it was used in ‘Purim Shpiels’, the famous masquerades, games, and plays enjoyed on this happy festival that celebrates the Jews overcoming their enemies. Unfortunately, until several more Lyon Shekels and ancient numismatic documents are found, we may never be able to solve the mystery.

NOTES: 1 Revue Numismatique, 1892, page 244, item no. 7.

2 *Explanation of and Observations on an Antique Medal..Now in the Possession of S. Lyon*, by S. Lyon, privately published, London 1810.

3 See ‘False Shekels, Medals that Influenced Modern History’  
the SHEKEL, May/June 2000



# Geneva's Jewish History

Jews apparently first settled in Geneva after their expulsion from France by Philip Augustus in 1182, receiving protection from the local bishop. The first mention of a Jew in an official document dates from the end of the 13th century. At first Jews were not authorized to settle in Geneva itself but only in the vicinity. They engaged in moneylending and moneychanging as well as in commerce on a partnership basis with Christian merchants. There were also some physicians among them.

Jews having to pass through Geneva on business paid a poll tax of four denarii (pregnant women paid a double tax). From the early 15th century, the merchants and the municipal council restricted the Jewish activities, and from 1428 Jewish residence was confined to a separate quarter (near the present Rue des Granges). The relations between the Jews and the Christian merchants were strained and the Jewish quarter was frequently attacked by the populace. The most serious attack occurred at Easter 1461. The duke's representatives admonished the city authorities but the situation of the Jews continued to deteriorate. In 1488, Jewish physicians were forbidden to practice there and in 1490 the Jews were expelled from the city.

Subsequently no Jews lived in Geneva for 300 years. A proposal to allow a group from Germany to settle if they undertook to pay a high tax and perform military service obligations was rejected by the municipal council in 1582. In 1783 Jewish residence was permitted in the nearby town of Carouge, which was then under the jurisdiction of the dukes of Savoy.

After the French Revolution Geneva was annexed by France and remained under French rule until 1814. During this period, the Jews enjoyed equal rights of citizenship. However, in 1815 Geneva became a canton within the Swiss confederation, and subsequently their position deteriorated.

The acquisition of real estate by Jews throughout the territory of the canton was now prohibited. The Jews in Geneva were not granted civic

Synagogue in Geneva





rights until 1841, and freedom of religious worship until 1843. The Jewish community was officially recognized in 1853 and a synagogue was inaugurated in 1859. The first rabbi of Geneva was Joseph Wertheimer, who also lectured at the University of Geneva. At the turn of the century, Geneva University attracted many Jewish students from Russia. Chaim Weizmann lectured there in organic chemistry in 1900–04.

As the seat of the League of Nations, Geneva was also the seat of the *Comite pour la Protection des Droits des Minorites Juives*, headed by Leon Motzkin. The World Jewish Congress was founded in Geneva in 1936, and the last Zionist Congress before World War II took place there in August 1939. During World War II, the city served as an important center for information about the fate of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe.

After the war, although the headquarters of the United Nations were established in New York, Geneva preserved its international importance as seat of the European office of the United Nations and of many UN and other international agencies. Consequently, many Jewish organizations, including the Jewish Agency, the World Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and ORT, established their European headquarters there. The government of Israel maintains a permanent delegation to the European office of the United Nations, headed by an ambassador.

The Jewish community of Geneva numbered 2,245 in 1945, and 2,700 in 1968. After World War II a number of East European Jews settled in Geneva, and later Jews from North Africa and the Middle East also settled there. The community, which consists of separate Ashkenazi and Sephardi congregations, has two synagogues, a mikveh, and a community center.

Canton coinage from Geneva illustrates this article.





## Benjamin Nathan Cardozo

by Fred L. Bertram

Benjamin Nathan Cardozo is a descendant of prominent colonial American Sephardim. Isaac Nunez Cardozo (1751–1832), an American Revolutionary patriot, was one of four sons of Aaron Nunez Cardoso, a London merchant who migrated to New York in about 1750. Born in London, Isaac Nunez was brought to New York by his mother in 1752. He was among the company of Jews who helped defend Charleston harbor against the British (1776) during the American Revolution. For a time he resided in Easton, Pa., where he was a tailor of men's fashions. Isaac's brother, David Nunez (1752–1835), patriot of the American Revolution, was born in New York. He settled in Charleston in about 1775. Enlisting in the South Carolina Grenadiers, David Nunez saw action against the British repeatedly, and was taken prisoner once. Two other brothers were Moses (1755–1818), and Abraham (1758–1816). David's son, Jacob Nunez (1786–1873), economist, was born in Savannah, Ga. He lived in Charleston from 1796 to 1860 and during the Civil War spent time in Atlanta and Mobile. Jacob had a distinguished career as a journalist, and was an important Unionist partisan in the States-rights nullification controversy in South Carolina in the 1830s. He was one of the most able economists of the classical liberal tradition in early America.

Benjamin Nathan Cardozo's father, Albert was the grandson of Isaac Nunez. He was educated in New York City, where he began to practice law in 1849. In 1863 Cardozo was elected to the Court of Common Pleas on the Tammany ticket, and in 1867 became a judge on the New York State Supreme Court.

Every so often, the history books make way for a Jew of the stature of the great minds who have helped the Jewish people survive through four thousand years. Benjamin Nathan Cardozo has been ranked as one of the ten foremost judges in American judicial history, as one of America's greatest writers on law, as "the great interpreter of the common law." No judge ever came to the Supreme Court of the United States, said Chief Justice Hughes, in eulogy, "more fully equipped by learning, acumen, dialectical skill, and disinterested purpose."

Benjamin Nathan Cardozo (1870-1938), was born in New York where his family settled before the American Revolution. Young Cardozo was prepared for college by a private tutor, Horatio Alger, Jr., of rags-to-riches storybook fame. In 1885, at the age of fifteen, Cardozo entered Columbia College as a member of the freshman class of 1889. He was recognized as



the leading intellect of his class as well as the one who spoke the most powerful English. Graduating from Columbia College, Cardozo studied at Columbia Law School and was admitted to the New York State Bar in 1891. During his practice of law, over the next 22 years, Cardozo distinguished himself as a "lawyer's lawyer," as he distinguished himself later as a "judge's judge." His chief skill as a lawyer and later as a judge, lay in appellate work. He was a jurist "to whom the legal profession looked for inspiration and guidance."

"For him," wrote the Reverend Dr. David de Sola Pool, of Cardozo's ancestral Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, New York's Shearith Israel, "the law is the foundation of organized society."

During his lifetime, Cardozo received honorary degrees from many universities but the honor he appreciated most was his election as a trustee of Columbia University, the first Jew to hold such a post since his forbear, Gershom Mendes Seixas, "The Patriot Jewish Minister of the Revolution." In 1913, Cardozo was elected justice of the Supreme Court of New York and soon thereafter was appointed temporary associate judge of the Court of Appeals, the highest appeal court in the state. After this appointment, New York's Governor Martin Glynn made the statement that he was the first governor in the country to appoint an orthodox Jew to a state court of last resort. In 1917, Cardozo was appointed a regular member of the court and in the same year was elected for a 14-year term. In 1927 he was elected chief judge of the Court of Appeals.

"During his judgeship on the Court of Appeals, the court exerted great influence on the development of the common law throughout the United States, and even in England, because of the brilliancy of Cardozo's reasoning and the weight of the authorities upon which he based his decisions." Cardozo is particularly noted for his original thinking as expounded in his books: *Nature of the Judicial Process* (1921), *Growth of the Law* (1924), *Paradoxes of Legal Science* (1928), and *Law and Literature* (1930). "He emphasized that a judge had to look beyond the legal authorities to meet responsibility to those seeking justice. He had to be cognizant of, and acquaint himself with, the latest developments in the field of psychology and economics. According to Roscoe Pound, Cardozo was one of America's greatest writers on law: 'In American sociological jurisprudence -the outstanding work is that of Mr. Justice Cardozo.'"

When Cardozo was nominated by President Herbert Hoover for appointment to the Supreme Court of the United States in 1932, his appointment was unanimously approved by both the subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee, by the full committee and by the Senate without discourse or roll call. "Quiet, gentle, and reserved, Cardozo was



deemed 'a paragon of moral insight on the American bench by legal philosopher Edmond Cahn.' "

Cardozo was a supporter of Jewish education. Something of the man is revealed in these excerpts from an address he delivered at the Sixth Annual Commencement Exercises of the Jewish Institute of Religion, May 24, 1931. His subject was, "Values."

*"The submergence of self in the pursuit of an ideal, the readiness to spend oneself without measure, prodigally, almost ecstatically, for something intuitively apprehended as great and noble. One knows not why-some of us like to believe this is what religion means. True, I am sure, it is that values such as these will be found to have survived when creeds are shattered and schisms healed and sects forgotten and the things of brass and stone are one with Nineveh and Tyre....*

*You are going forth today as preachers of the eternal values. You will find mockery and temptation on the highways, and for the values that you hold to be eternal many a tinsel token will be offered in exchange. Sycophants and time servers and courtiers and all the lovers of the fleshpots will assail you with warnings that you are squandering the happy days under the sun and will ask you to tell them to what use . . . Then will be the time you will need to gird yourselves with the strength that this Institute of Religion, this Institute of the better life, has striven with all her might to bestow upon her sons. Then will be the time when you will need to bethink yourselves of the values that were chosen by the prophets and saints of Israel, and by the goodly and noble of every race and clime."*

The numismatic illustration is medal #88 of the Medallion History of the Jews of America. The medal portrays Benjamin Cardozo with sculpted decorations of the U.S. Supreme Court in the background. The medal was sculpted by Karen Worth.





# **CLUB BULLETIN**



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*Editor*

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**INS / ICC OF LOS ANGELES** – A fun time was had by all who were able to attend the July meeting. The coin game "COIN-O" was played and many prizes, including several silver Eagles were won, along with cash being the final grand prize. At the August meeting, an ANA slide program entitled "Roman Republican Coinage" was shown. This excellent presentation depicts gorgeous gold, silver, copper and bronze hand-struck coins that were used for a thousand years and then lost. Now found, they have been expertly photographed and made into a truly educational program. Back on the meeting scene were Murray and Syd Singer who, because of several illness setbacks, were able to attend the last couple of meetings after a long absence.


**ANA CONVENTION** – Although I was personally unable to attend this year's convention in Philadelphia, from all reports that have passed by me, the convention was another fabulous one. And of course the AINA table was very busy (my usual station). Hopefully I will be able to attend next year's festivities.

**CLUB MEETINGS** – Now that the new fall season for meetings is now in full swing, please make an effort to attend (and your participation would surely be a big help -- like being a speaker or bringing an exhibit).



**BUY / SELL / TRADE** – There has been a huge interest in this feature the last couple of months. There have been a few “wants” and many “sells”. Please peruse this paragraph very carefully to see if just maybe what you have been looking for is listed. And too, why not double-check the last few issues. You may have just overlooked something. For this issue, we have had inquiries from Switzerland, Florida and California. For sale: (9-A) – set of 59 Palestine Mandate coins in original wooden holder; bronze and silver City Coin medals. /// (9-B) – 5 anti-Semitic notes; 16 pages of anti-Semitic text and illustrations of Judaica (1929 and in German); /// (9-C) – Set of proof & unc coins from 1948-1985; 1963-64 trade coin (18) set; Palestine mill coins from 1927-1942; collection of Turkish coins; and collection of Egyptian coins from 1916-1920 (Sultan Faud) and collection of Mohammed V coins from 1909 – 1915. If you are interested in any of the above, please write to me at the address on the previous page and I will get you in touch with the proper person. Be sure to make a notation of the exact items and their number (such as 9-A).

**MOMENTS IN THOUGHT** – Take into account that great love and great achievements involve great risk; ... when you lose, don't lose the lesson; ... remember that silence is sometimes the best answer; ... live a good and honorable life – then when you get older, you will be able to enjoy it a second time; ... judge your success by what you had to give up in order to get it; ... once a year, go someplace you have never been before; ... be gentle with the earth. (portions of the Millennium message of the Dalai Lama).

**COMMENTS FROM DJS:** Happy holidays to everyone. Can you even believe that it is nearly the end of 2000? Where has the time gone? Hope this finds one and all in a festive mood for the holidays. This issue marks the end of 22 years of being AINA's club editor (began 12/78). Talk about where the time has gone. Be well, be happy. 



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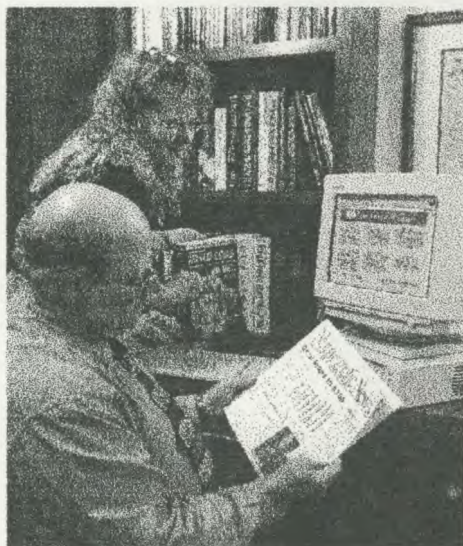
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